



State Capitol | Lansing, Michigan 48913

PH (517) 373.7670 | FAX (517) 373.5958

www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/sanborn/

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Contact: Peter Langley
517-373-7670

Sen. Sanborn: New parole laws needed after mistakes led to Macomb murders

LANSING — State Sen. Alan Sanborn introduced legislation today that would make it explicit that Michigan Department of Corrections officials do not have to automatically release an offender accused of parole violations if an administrative fact-finding hearing is not held within 45 days of the offender being incarcerated for the violation.

Sanborn, R-Richmond Township, said the change is needed after the case of Patrick Selepak, whom police and prosecutors say killed Scott and Melissa Berels and a Genesee County man in February. Selepak should have been put back in prison after parole violations but was mistakenly paroled again because an administrative fact-finding hearing wasn't held within the specified time after his incarceration for the violation.

Under Senate Bill 1196, corrections officials can continue holding someone beyond 45 days if the offender has been returned to prison and is awaiting a parole violation hearing.

"The families of Scott and Melissa deserve better than what they've received from the state of Michigan thus far," Sanborn said. "These mistakes by the department leave me concerned about the administration of our corrections system as a whole. With such concerns I feel writing this policy into law is required. In addition to this legislation, I will continue pressing for additional legislative hearings to learn how these heinous crimes were allowed to happen."

According to news reports, Selepak's case isn't unique. More than a dozen offenders who belonged in custody, including a convicted rapist, were released in the past two years by the department because of the mistaken view that the convicts had to be released if they hadn't had a hearing within 45 days of going back behind bars.

SB 1196 was referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee for consideration.

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